

SHOPPINGHOUR



NO. 2



WHY WILL WHEN YOU CAN CHILL

What is Shoppinghour? An experiment; an attempt to unshackle the intellect from the restrictive disciplinary processes of specialization and to celebrate unbridled interdisciplinary discourses; the harmonious coexistence and perhaps even coalescence (or perhaps contamination) of philosophy with literature, politics and art. The ridiculous, the absurd and even the irrational is treated with the utmost respect, held in the same light as anything else one might struggle to examine: god, life, death, time...; and the established, the norm, the everyday, is challenged for simply being too suspicious. There is an element of self-indulgence here. But rather than pretend that there is not, it is instead celebrated. And this celebration, this spontaneous and fortuitous event that came from absolutely nowhere, is called *Shoppinghour*; an event that provides a stage, a platform, for anyone interested in starting a discussion, anyone eager to share and exchange their thoughts, without restrictions: an intellectual liberation. Contribute your cosmic musings, unorthodox sentiments, political frustrations or poetic meditations.



GUEST STAR: THE BURROWING OWL



manure, shredding it, and lining the nest burrow with it, including the entrance. Lining it with manure is labour-intensive for the tiny birds. 'It just kind of begs the question of why in the world would they go through this effort to bring manure around their eggs and nestlings (...) It's very odd in a sense that many other birds want to hide the location of their nests. By bringing all this manure back and shredding it up, it's making the nest more obvious.' In fact it's one of the ways that researchers know that a hole in the ground is actually a burrowing owl nest.

Shoppinghour's guest star - the burrowing owl - is a gesture, a bow of recognition to its father, its origin, the cosmic centre of philosophy, Birkbeck, which carries the image of an owl upon its long-established time-honoured emblem.

Because burrowing owls are primarily associated with urban and agricultural settings, they've been known to use horse, cow and domestic dog or coyote manure. It is suggested that nest lining may be a way to let other owls know that 'the nest burrow that they're in is occupie...'

"More than 100 years ago biologists noted that burrowing owls had what seemed to humans to be an odd behaviour of gathering mammal

RED MUSCLE

BARET YACIOUBIAN

It was a Sunday and I sat at the café watching the two fat wind-up pigeons on the sandstone rim of a nearby rooftop; the male was easy to distinguish from the way he moved. He kept trying to land half-kisses on the female's beak and the female always side-stepped him, waddling to two three pigeon paces away but never flying off. Then the whole process would repeat itself.

It was hot and the café had just opened. I was the first customer. Simis the owner finished setting out the chairs and tables, took my order and went inside. A young married couple I knew rolled their son's pram around the corner of the courtyard into view. They smiled at me and said hello and sat at a table. They were eating ice-cream and talking softly to each other. Their boy lay open-mouthed in the pram, his hair plastered to his brow, breathing evenly, sweating, asleep.

That night, I went back with a book and tried another table. When I sat, I remembered another day I'd been invited to the table of a man I hadn't seen for over a year and whose name I couldn't remember. I remembered friends of mine who knew him better who'd told me he wasn't well in the head and that he'd been to prison, for what they never mentioned.

I'd accepted his invitation and sat opposite him. We'd started talking, catching up. His right leg vibrated furiously and I'd asked what was wrong. His face and hands had several bad scars. The surgeons had probably been military. Friends had told me he had an ex-wife and a kid and a chopper and worked at a travel agency. He had a short muscled body and a very masculine face, thinning hair slicked back with water and a well-trimmed moustache.

His right leg vibrated and I'd asked what was wrong. He'd told me he was on three kinds of medication. I'd asked him for the names. I'd told him the only one I recognised was Valium. He'd told me the other two were new.

That night I watched a woman at a full table who I'd introduced myself to months earlier at the café. She'd looked like she was in her late thirties and had long wavy vibrant black hair, chiseled features and sensual eyes. She'd taken my hands and I'd sat close to her, caressing hers.

I watched her that night; she laughed quietly and lit cigarettes, draping one arm over the back of her chair. I remembered the thin fabric of the trousers she'd worn when I'd talked to her, looking at her white skin, imagining her still-tight white ass flexing, imagining her hair enveloping my shoulders, fucking her motherly cunt, sticking my thumb through her thin bruised lips.

It was afternoon and the tables filled with sunburned locals with red skin and white teeth smiling sleepily, the impending repetition of a kissless night and stars akimbo breathing cool lapping exhalations across the courtyard. A hodja wailed a distorted prayer over a microphone in a nearby minaret. I swallowed a pill with my coffee. The stars erupted in space, winking out and the sky was black.

I swallowed a second. The red people melted minutes in their glasses and drank through gleaming teeth. I swallowed a third. She walked through the tables with long chord-drawn legs, taut but sagging slightly on the bone, pale flesh pulled and I wanted her more than ever.

A fourth. He grabbed her and pushed down his jeans, tore her dress, pressed his scarred face into her breasts. The red people stopped talking, watching each other with tight smiles. A fifth and he fucked her against the wall. She screamed and pushed him into her, harder with each stroke.

A sixth and the people rose and clapped.

A seventh and my heart stops. My blood stills. The screams rise higher and red muscle surrounds me.

TEN THESES ON WRITING

ANTONIS BALASOPOULOS

1. That life obtains its meaning when read backwards, while writing does not, is proof of the fact that freedom is more at home in writing than in life.
2. All writing revels in the miracle of a beginning, a first letter or word from which all creation springs forth. But this miracle is also painfully self-conscious of its being fraudulent, a cheap magician's trick. In fact, writing is the manifest proof of the impossibility of a beginning, and this is its source of secret shame.
3. The ontological state which all finished writing engenders in the author is a state that could equally well be recognized as paradisiacal or infernal. In fact, it is neither. To write is to practice profanation in a world already bereft of the sacred; it is to sustain being in a state of unsavable and undamnable incompleteness, to defer all prospects of a Day of Judgment.
4. Writing is the process whereby the threshold of the unknown is renegotiated, for each of us, each time anew.
5. Writing is the necessary precondition for thought, not the other way around.
6. Writing is a compulsion that requires cultivation.
7. All writing carries within it the redemptive impulse toward wholeness, but can only be the true cipher of this impulse when one no longer recognizes it as one's own, like a child one has given up all hope for.
8. Writing is always a form of death experienced in advance, harbinger of an afterlife that no longer concerns us.
9. Writing is not expression—unless by “expression” we mean the coming forth of a plural and secret entity that one did not know one was host to. All efforts to make writing the vehicle of what we already know ourselves to be are spurious and dishonest.
10. Writing is the misguided but truthful form of the pursuit of felicity: truthful, because it grasps felicity in the real—as something fleeting and transient, as dependent on good luck as is the happy turn of a phrase; misguided, because in making of all gain a recovered loss, it mistakes happiness for what it has accidentally dropped on our path while it hurriedly disappears around a corner.

‘YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS...’

IMOGEN LE PATOUREL

Recently, during a public talk I attended, one of the two distinguished gents at the front of the room admiringly quoted verbatim from the writings of the other to illustrate a point, relishing a particular turn of phrase that had obviously acquired personal meaning for him. The expression on the face of the other was rather beautiful at that moment: the swift transition from blushing pleasure at this unexpected homage straight to the awkward bewilderment of one caught unawares, for he had to admit that he had no recollection whatsoever of writing the phrase, and had not recognised it as his own. I was struck by the contrast: the phrase had originated in his labour, but then had floated off like a bit of thistledown, straight out of his memory, and promptly lost all significance for him. Yet it had planted itself in the mind of the friend and been incorporated into his inner world to the extent that he recalled it easily word for word.

The perennially quotable Milan Kundera has this to say:

“Forgetting is the great private problem of man: death as the loss of the self. But what is this self? It is the sum of everything we remember. Thus, what terrifies us about death is not the loss of the future but the loss of the past. Forgetting is a form of death ever present within life”.

Many philosophers have made memory the cornerstone of their conception of personal identity. But of course, as Hume pointed out, our memory is very patchy and erratic. If we are asked, “What were you doing on 11th January 2003?” it is highly unlikely we would have the remotest idea. We could guess by piecing together general information about the period – where we lived, our habitual routines at that time. But these are the banal, outward facts, not the timbre of what we actually lived through. Memory in fact conserves relatively little, and many have noted that it conserves most intensely in childhood – when there are relatively few competing memories in the storehouse and each experience is a novelty – and much more economically in later life. (Does this mean we lose more and more of ourselves as time marches on? Or the opposite – as we get older, we become master of our memories, more adept at integrating the most important ones into a unified whole and jettisoning the rest? Could we say that the things most constitutive of my sense of self are the things I am least likely to forget?)

As there are many kinds of memory, so there are many kinds of forgetfulness. One occurs when you are (often acutely) aware that something has been lost (tip of the tongue frustration); another when you are not even aware of the loss: years later, a chance incident may recall something to mind, so there is a sense in which the memory can be said to have existed all that time – but it has slept during the interval in a spell of profound forgetfulness to all intents and purposes indistinguishable from death, and its retrieval is a miracle of resurrection.

Sometimes one is struck by the stubborn persistence of an apparently trivial and arbitrary memory, whilst desperately struggling to call to mind some supposedly significant fact. We can work on improving our memory and employ all sorts of memory aids in order to keep forgetfulness at bay. The spoken, the written and the digitally encoded symbol are successive weapons in the war against forgetting. But to what extent does chance play a role in what is preserved and what is lost – in shaping the shifting collection of memories that at any given time is what is available to us of our pasts? Not only does it conserve relatively little, but memory conserves in a devious and sometimes self-deceptive manner: memory as the ultimate editor, the spinner of life into fiction; we remember what flatters our image of ourselves, or what is congruent with the overall meaning of the personal story we tell ourselves.

Selective memory indeed - memory motivated by aesthetic criteria or psychological need. For psychoanalysis, the most repressed (the least accessible) memories are at once and for that very reason often the most interesting ones.

On a communal scale, mass forgetfulness, that ever present companion to time, can be seen as an insidious enemy to human progress, the antithesis of the Enlightenment ideal of accumulating, advancing knowledge. (For Plato, all knowledge is a remembering of that which we once encountered but have on earth forgotten). Foucault depicted the natural erosion brought about by time as one of the forces inimical to the march of human reason. When we bequeath insights to future generations, we implore them not to forget what has been vouchsafed us – insofar as humanity collectively remembers, we are not condemned to start anew with each new birth, without learning from what others have already lived through. Hope is what we choose to remember.

An enthusiastic championing of the role of forgetting in our lives, and a cautionary tale about the dangers of too much remembering, can be found in the oeuvre of – who else? – Nietzsche.

Forgetting was an important motif for Nietzsche. He was at pains to, er, remind us that in forgetting we perform a necessary and healthy function. In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, he characterises forgetfulness not simply as a passive loss, but as “an active ability to suppress, positive in the strongest sense of the word, to which we owe the fact that what we simply live through, experience, take in, no more enters our consciousness... than does the thousand-fold process which takes place with our physical consumption of food...” Enabling us to avoid the continual accumulation of the past, a permanent existential indigestion, forgetting is emancipatory - it frees up our resources to engage with the immediate lived moment rather than be obsessed, chained to, something that is already gone. The person who cannot forget cannot cope – cannot, Nietzsche claims, be happy. Nietzsche’s picture of the ‘necessarily forgetful animal’ is one in which remembering is, happily, the exception (almost the aberration) rather than the rule: “forgetting is a strength, representing a form of robust health”. In *On the Uses & Disadvantages of History for Life*, Nietzsche ridicules those avid historians who wish to preserve everything – they are the painstaking curators of dust and mould. This line of thought is reminiscent of, and perhaps directly influenced, the psychoanalytic critique of what one might call the ‘apotheosis of the museum’: a careful fossilisation and revering of the past, an unwillingness to forget, as masking a parallel inability to accept change and death and therefore to truly live in the present. Forgetting is vital if life is to be open, creative. The paradigmatic experience of Dionysian bliss in *The Birth of Tragedy* is one of intoxication and concomitant self-forgetfulness. The loss of self that Kundera dreads in forgetting is here embraced.

Indeed, given contemporary mankind’s unprecedented means of preservation, the custodians of knowledge may soon need to become adept at deciding what we must forget, in order that the sheer quantity and proliferation of information does not overwhelm us and make all discernment impossible. In times when a person must spend such a proportion of life simply getting to grips with the history of their specialism before they can embark on original research, the need to divest ourselves of the past may soon become an urgent one.

Memory comes into play, Nietzsche acknowledges, to enable us to plan, to design, to become responsible. But how did humanity first begin to counteract the great force of forgetfulness? For Nietzsche, perhaps the oldest and most terrible ‘technique of mnemonics’ is pain. Cruelty, suffering, torment, ‘blood and horror’ – the recognition that “only something that continues to hurt stays in the memory”. Kundera too asserts: “the memory of revulsion is stronger than the memory of tenderness!” Here, suffering and disgust are the epitome of the memorable – having a stubborn, primal power to oppose the passage of time which is absent from the experience of joy and pleasure. By inference, our greatest happiness is something that we can afford to let be light and transitory – those truly immersed in being can live it just the once, and therefore have no need to remember it.

RECURSION

JOHN HEYDERMAN

One man went to mow...

A couple of days ago, I found inspiration in that most likely of places, *The Penguin Concise Dictionary of Computing*. Trying to understand a concept in computational models of the mind I looked up the word “recursion” and found the following:

recursion: (see recursion) An old joke beloved of computer lexicographers, but one that will not be repeated here.

Recursion is not to be confused with regress. Regress is bad. Philosophers don’t like regress, especially infinite regress. When you have to explain or justify something by appealing to something

else, you have to make sure that the something else doesn't have to appeal to some-further-thing else in the same way.

Here's an example borrowed from, among others, Schopenhauer. You think you have free will. Fair enough, give me an example. You tell me that you have chosen to read this article. But here's the thing. How did you choose to choose to read this article? And, for that matter did you choose to choose to choose to read this article? You get the picture?

...went to mow a meadow...

Unlike philosophers, young children love regress. A friend, a father of three, pointed this out when I complained that they repeat the little film clip in each episode of Teletubbies. "Again! Again!" the children cry. And we give it to them, over and over again. All the best children's songs (There Were Ten in the Bed, A Bear Climbed over the Mountain) go round in circles. All the best children's books (Donaldson's The Gruffalo) are recursive.

The more attentive reader might have noticed that I have, just now, confused regress and recursion. But, I am confused. Or, more precisely, I am dizzy, and I think you probably are too because we are all spinning around in a culture of regression and recursion. I know this is an old po-mo chestnut but just in case you haven't heard it before, this is how the story goes. (If you think you have heard it all before, start reading this article again from the top.)

A woman appears as a contestant on Celebrity Big Brother. Her claim to celebrity status is that she was a contestant on...Big Brother. Another contestant's claim to fame is that he is the boyfriend of a contestant on Big Brother. Another is the mother of the girlfriend of the boyfriend of a contestant on Big Brother.

...four men, three men, two men, one man...

And it's not only dross. In 1999, a Hollywood actor called Malkovich plays himself in a film about... being himself in which he enters his own head and sees the world through his own eyes. In 1979, Calvino publishes a book called If on a Winter's Night a Traveler, about a reader trying to read a book called If on a Winter's Night a Traveler. In 1921, Pirandello sends Six Characters in Search of an Author. And if you really want to go back a bit, to the middle of the eighteenth century say, a certain J.S. Bach perfects the art of fugue with tunes within tunes, nested and overlapping like some mutant Russian doll.

So as recursion recurs more and more, do we need to find a reason (for the reason) that it does? Well here's one and maybe it'll do.

Things move too fast. There's been too much progress in our recent history that actually turns out to be regress. We want things to stay still but of course nothing does. So as a second best we settle for things to coming round in a circle, or, better still, an inward spiral. That way we get back to where we started from. That way, or so we hope, we'll find our way home.

...and his dog, went to mow a meadow.



"Where was I?" Baudrillard speculates, his ponderous face grafted within his old man's hands twined by gnarled, slumbering veins, his eyes firmly shut and the tears behind the filmy flesh trembling like ripe red roses. "Yes, now I remember!" he suddenly cries out, his fingers flickering before him with a glimpse of an all but extinguished optimism, a residue of some lost age of youthful innocence. "Yes, as I was suggesting earlier, the two elements that fascinate 20th century masses are joined: the white magic of movies and the black magic of terrorism. But...where does one go from here? What is there more to say about the tyranny of reality and fiction? Reality and fiction, fiction and reality..." Baudrillard starts to sob childishly, his whimpers bouncing on and off the silent walls of a half-lighted drawing room and echoing hypnotically like the sound of waves trying to get hold of the shore. "What does it mean to look at one looking up in the sky and not knowing what he sees?" Baudrillard whispers. "What does it mean...What does it ultimately mean to look up in the sky and behold what cannot be brought down to words; what cannot be untethered by these frail, waning sentences; what will forever evade us, leaving behind it a vapour trail of echoing laughter? This agony, but also this hope, of the act of looking up in the sky is one that behooves me to go on, to refuse my silence and unmake the foundations of philosophy. What does one see when one turns his eyes toward the sky? Two planes tearing the blue cloth of the morning sky asunder and crashing silently into two pillars of iron? Or two white birds slicing the evening sky with graceful obliviousness, their feathered nimbleness brushing the moon aside? They all look up, but what do they see? Perhaps this is the question mark that is in greatest need of the urgency of our times. What is there to look upon? A counterfeit anthropomorphic god hovering above the face of the waters with benevolent smiles full of snickery, his turgid hands showering fortitude over his flock of bleary sheep? There is nothing more to see behind the clouds, but the faint hope of lives not lived." Baudrillard stops talking and shuts his eyes for once more, the tears now streaming like untamed arrows of light. Within the darkness he hears familiar voices issuing forth from some forgotten corner of his consciousness, yet fails to assign them any kind of importance. Baudrillard opens his eyes and looks at the window spilling rivulets of darkness all around him. With a gentle, exasperating sigh, Baudrillard opens the window, at first hesitantly, then more sure of himself, and looks up in the sky, only to see the moon reflecting the grandeur of the earth.

Bibliography: Jean Baudrillard *The Spirit of Terrorism*

Written for the short video *Fantasia* by Peter Eramian - www.youtube.com/shoppinghour



FRIEDRICH'S DISCOVERY PART 1

PETER ERAMIAN

The death of... The corpse of... of a glorious beast of such sublime value, such subtle yet profound existence, such monstrous yet beautiful hope, had been stumbled upon. Perhaps at dawn as the sun's osseous rays were mercilessly canceling out, one by one, the delicate laments of the mystical twilight; after a restless night of exhaustive pensiveness, that man, our dear Friedrich, perhaps the greatest of all cultural *postmortemists*, stumbled upon its half-dead, yet still ever so incredibly vibrant, glorious golden vessel.

Perhaps this discovery was made by a river, somewhere in the wilderness, after the glorious beast, weighed down by shame and guilt for reasons incomprehensible to the human mind, had attempted to end its own glorious life; or perhaps after some other monstrous entity, lacking any hint of mercy, had captured and tortured it, punished it, stealing it from every glorious breath that once held its glorious body pumping with such enormous pride, such infinity.

Looking down upon it, and even then sensing as though he were looking up directly into the eyes of God, our dear Friedrich lifted its glorious vessel and carried it to even grounds. Desperate to save its glorious life he tried ever concoction available but saw that it was simply too late, for it was clear that, in its state, the only remedy with some effect would have been none other than the nectar of the Gods. Before its demise the glorious beast spurted out some glorious but unintelligible words; perhaps they were words of infinite wisdom, or perhaps they were words of shameful regret; or perhaps just gibberish cries for help. Friedrich struggled desperately to apprehend but could not, for dissolution had taken the glorious beast's life and with it the clarity of its glorious voice.



MASHA MA

POSTMORTEMISM ?

Postmortem: (1) of, pertaining to, or occurring in the time following death. (2) of or pertaining to examination of the body after death. (3) occurring after the end of something. (Dictionary.com)

The death of God will lead, Nietzsche says, not only to the rejection of a belief of cosmic or physical order but also to a rejection of absolute values themselves — to the rejection of belief in an objective and universal moral law, binding upon all individuals. (Wikipedia)

Postmodernism: Largely influenced by the Western European disillusionment induced by World War II, postmodernism tends to refer to a cultural, intellectual, or artistic state lacking a clear central hierarchy or organizing principle and embodying extreme complexity, contradiction, ambiguity, diversity, interconnectedness or interreferentiality, in a way that is often indistinguishable

from a parody of itself. (Wikipedia)

Cultural Postmortemism: of or pertaining to examination of a cultural or political era after its death; often with the effect of predicting possible repercussions.



"If there is a god, I will find him!" cried Dumbo.

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